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SUBJECT: TURKEY FLOATS MIDDLE EAST SECURITY AND COOPERATION  
INITIATIVE AT UNGA

REF: ANKARA 1628

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) President Abdullah Gul will unveil Turkey's security and cooperation in the Middle East initiative (reftel) during his September 23 UNGA speech, according to MFA Middle East desk officer Murat Omeroglu. In very general terms, Gul will advocate for increased regional dialogue and propose the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East (CSCME) as a forum for addressing comprehensive security issues, particularly interrelated and multidimensional problems such as water and the environment.

¶2. (C) Omeroglu explained the Turkish initiative will evolve along a trajectory similar to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has its roots in a 1973 conference. Ideally, the CSCME will serve as a regional confidence building measure. He underscored it will in no way circumvent the Middle East peace process or attempt to address the "hard issues." Planning is very nascent; the GOT must flesh out many details before establishing any timetable or agenda. Omeroglu noted the proposal being circulated is still a working document; the modalities are rapidly evolving to reflect input from Turkish embassies and potential member capitals.

¶3. (C) The GOT plans to invite all Arab League members, Israel, and Iran to join the CSCME. Omeroglu characterized initial response to the Turkish proposal as positive, but added many countries are choosing to withhold public support until the concept is better defined. The Arab League reportedly issued a resolution at the Cairo Foreign Ministers meeting earlier this month endorsing the Turkish initiative. He noted the MFA briefed the Israeli Embassy on the proposal and is awaiting GOI feedback.

¶4. (C) Comment: The CSCME has promise but remains not-ready-for-prime-time. Having learned its lesson with the ill-executed Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP), the MFA is hesitant to prematurely launch this initiative without a substantive framework and hard commitment from member states. While the GOT will likely continue to shop the CSCME around, not least to bolster its credibility as a regional actor, the MFA is taking a cautious, pragmatic approach given the political realities of having Iran, the Arab League, and Israel sit at the same table. The Arab League has reportedly already voiced concerns that participation in the CSCME would give the impression of normalization of relations with Israel

prior to any resolution of core issues.

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